

Burke, George
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THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

ON NOVEMBER 22, 1963, AT DALLAS, TEXAS

Statement of Special Agent Winston G. Lawson, United States Secret Service, concerning his activities and official duties on November 22, 1963, and until his arrival in Washington, D.C., on November 23, 1963:

On Friday, November 22, 1963, I handled general advance details, talked over final arrangements with Mr. Jack Puterbaugh; Mr. Art Baies, White House Communications Agency; SAs Hickey and Kinney, and talked to various individuals on the phone before departing the Sheraton-Dallas Hotel. One of those who contacted me by phone was ASAC Kellerman in Fort Worth concerning car seating and instructions as to whether the bubble top on the President's car was to be used. I also spoke with SAIC Sorrels, Dallas office, on the phone concerning his taking SAs Hickey and Kinney to the airport. I departed the Sheraton-Dallas Hotel with SA David Grant.

At about 8:50 a.m. we arrived at the Dallas Trade Mart. I looked over the security of the parking lot and area where the President was to enter the building. Inside the building I checked on details of the luncheon, answered various questions from interested parties, talked with Agent Steuart already on duty at head table, and left Agent Grant to complete the final preparations and survey for the President's visit and departed for Love Field.

I arrived at Love Field shortly after 9:30 a.m. and checked to see if police security was in effect on a special hole cut in fence for our motorcade's use. I also located the motorcade vehicles and drivers who had been asked to arrive by 9:30 a.m. I checked with Major Nedbal, USAF Advance Officer, on positioning of airplanes and other information. Questions of various press, Host Committee, political committee, communications and press technicians had to be answered. I started forming the motorcade, parking the vehicles and busses in proper positions, instructed drivers, checked and gave instructions to police at press area. I answered the security phone on a number of occasions and talked with Agent Hill in Fort Worth concerning Dallas weather conditions. The weather cleared and the President's car was placed in position for departure from airport without the bubble top covering it. I met some members of Greeting Committee and checked over flowers to be presented to Mrs. Kennedy and other ladies. I checked with Chief Curry as to location of Lead Car and had WHCA portable radio put in and checked. I also checked to see if escort vehicles were in position down the apron from reception area and checked to see if police were posted for crowd control.

About this time the press plane arrived and was met by me. White House Press and Transportation Staff were given instructions. I learned sound equipment, Presidential Seal, flags and a special chair had been sent by them direct to Trade Mart from Fort Worth, and so the police escort and vehicles arranged for these items to be taken to Trade Mart were not needed. Traveling press were requested to go either to their busses or press area.

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AF #2 then arrived and I met agents arriving on this plane. Those agents scheduled to be taken by police vehicles to the Trade Mart were shown to these vehicles with instructions to report to Agent Grant at Trade Mart. Agent Bennett was reminded that he would be working Presidential follow-up car on the movement. I then went with those members of AF #2 party who wanted to greet the President's plane and the local Reception Committee to a point near where President's plane would be spotted.

The President's plane, AF #1, was spotted and I positioned myself at bottom of the rear ramp across from Vice President Johnson and others greeting the President. I walked along behind the President as he spoke to this group and continued on to the fence with him. The follow-up car agents and ASAIC Kelleman were with him along the fence and watching the members of the press, so I checked to see if the motorcade was ready to leave when the President was. The motorcade inched forward and many members of it entered their cars. I instructed others to hurry to their vehicles and returned to area where President, Mrs. Kennedy, and others were still proceeding along the fence. The President and Mrs. Kennedy were soon guided towards their car, and after seeing the follow-up car agents were around his car keeping members of press and others out of the way, and doing their other normal functions, I ran to the Lead Car and joined SAIC Corzels, Chief Curry, and Sheriff Decker.

The motorcade proceeded over the scheduled route from the airport. During the course of the trip I was watching crowd conditions along the route, requesting Chief Curry to give specific instructions to escort vehicles, keeping Lead Car in proper position in front of President's car depending on its speed and crowd conditions, watching for obstructions or other hazards, and in general performing normal duties of advance agent in the Lead Car. Chief Curry was giving instructions at my suggestion to escort vehicles for keeping crowd out of street, blocking traffic in certain areas, requesting pilot vehicles to speed or slow up, and giving orders needed for us to proceed unhampered.

The President's car made one unscheduled stop, apparently at his direction, which was not uncommon. This lasted only a few moments and motorcade proceeded on. On a few occasions I noticed agents leap off the follow-up car to intercept someone or when they thought someone was trying to reach the President's car. They were able to return to positions on the follow-up car.

The motorcade proceeded at about 15-20 miles per hour until the very heavy crowd concentration in the downtown area, when it slowed to approximately 10 miles per hour.

At the corner of Houston and Elm Streets I verified with Chief Curry that we were about five minutes from the Trade Mart and gave this signal over my

portable White House Communications radio. We were just approaching a railroad overpass and I checked to see if a police officer was in position there and that no one was directly over our path. I noticed a police officer but also noticed a few persons on the bridge and made motions to have these persons removed from over our path. As the Lead Car was passing under this bridge I heard the first loud, sharp report and in more rapid succession two more sounds like gunfire. I could see persons to the left of the motorcade vehicles running away. I noticed Agent Mickey standing up in the follow-up car with the automatic weapon and first thought he had fired at someone. Both the President's car and our Lead Car rapidly accelerated almost simultaneously. I heard a report over the two-way radio that we should proceed to the nearest hospital. I noticed Agent Hill hanging on to the rear of the President's vehicle. A motorcycle escort officer pulled alongside our Lead Car and said the President had been shot. Chief Curry gave a signal over his radio for police to converge on the area of the incident. I requested Chief Curry to have the hospital contacted that we were on the way. Our Lead Car assisted the motorcycles in escorting the President's vehicle to Parkland Hospital.

Upon our arrival there at approximately 12:34 p.m., I rushed into the emergency entrance, met persons coming with two stretchers and helped rush them outside. Governor Connally was being removed from the car when the stretchers arrived and he was placed on the first one. Mr. Fowers, myself and one or two others placed President Kennedy on a stretcher and we ran pushing the stretcher into the emergency area which hospital personnel directed us to. I remained outside the door where the President was being treated and requested a nurse to find someone who would know hospital personnel who should be admitted to the President's room. Other agents, in addition to some members of the White House staff, then stationed themselves at this door. ASAC Kellerman and myself went to an office in emergency area and used a phone to contact the White House Dallas switchboard, who in turn contacted SAIC Behn, White House Detail in Washington. Mr. Kellerman informed Mr. Behn what had happened and we kept that line open to Mr. Behn's office during our stay at Parkland Hospital. I went outside into a corridor and noticed that agents had established security to the emergency area then proceeded to rear of hospital to make sure police security was keeping general public from the immediate area. Upon returning to the emergency room office, I again assisted in keeping line to Washington open, talked with Mr. Behn in Washington, requested the Dallas White House switchboard to contact Austin, Texas, where the 12 p.m. (midnight) to 8:00 a.m. Secret Service shift was resting and instruct those agents to take first available plane back to Washington, D.C. A few minutes later I learned a special Air Force plane would take them from Bergstrom AFB (Austin, Texas) to Washington, D.C., and requested the Dallas White House switchboard to notify those agents of this change. It was then I learned that Mrs. Kennedy wished to return to Washington, D.C., with the body of President Kennedy immediately, and I returned to rear of hospital to see if enough motorcade vehicles remained for transportation of agents, staff and others needing transportation to the airport.

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Vice President Johnson had already been taken to Love Field and was aboard AF #1. The President's car and the Secret Service follow-up car had already been taken to Love Field for loading aboard the special Air Force plane.

I requested the police to be ready to escort us to the airplanes and drivers to have their cars ready. Arrangements had already been made by someone else for a hearse to transport the coffin. Returning inside I learned the Medical Examiner could not release the body and located Sheriff Decker, who had returned to his office, by phone. I believe Dr. Burkley, the President's White House physician, talked with the Sheriff. The President's body was released and the coffin placed in a hearse from the O'Neill Mortuary. At about 2:04 p.m. agents accompanied the President's body and Mrs. Kennedy in the hearse, and other agents rode in a Lincoln automobile behind this hearse. Other staff members rode in other cars. I rode in a police car ahead of the hearse, and motorcycles escorted us to Love Field position of AF #1. We arrived at AF #1 at about 2:15 p.m. I helped remove the coffin from the hearse and place it aboard AF #1.

I remained outside the airplane until it departed for Washington, D.C., after Vice President Johnson was sworn in as President by Federal Judge Sarah Hughes.

Police and agents had removed all general public and press from the immediate area.

While waiting for the departure of AF #1, FBI Agent Vincent Drain, Dallas office, told me SAC Gordon Shanklin, FBI, Dallas, Texas, had some information. I spoke with Mr. Shanklin on the phone and he told me that an individual who had been arrested for the investigation of the killing of a police officer that afternoon had worked at the Texas Book Depository Building. I asked Mr. Shanklin to relay this to an agent on duty in the Dallas Secret Service office and then requested Chief Curry, who was with me, to speak with Mr. Shanklin on the phone.

After the departure of President Johnson and the body of President Kennedy aboard AF #1 at approximately 2:47 p.m., I proceeded to Police Headquarters with Chief Curry and Agent David Grant. En route we learned SAIC Sorrels was at Police Headquarters. Upon our arrival there I reported to SAIC Sorrels and remained at Police Headquarters under his direction.

At approximately 11:00 p.m. Inspector Kelley, Chief's Office, United States Secret Service, arrived and at approximately 1:00 a.m., on November 23, 1963, he requested me to return to Washington, D.C., on a special plane which was returning evidence from the Dallas Police in the killing of Police Officer Tippit and President Kennedy. I went to the FBI Dallas office, met FBI Agent Drain again, and proceeded with him and the packaged evidence to

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Carswell AFB. I departed Carswell AFB aboard USAF plane #276 at 3:10 a.m., C.S.T., November 23, 1963, and arrived at Andrews AFB at 6:30 a.m., E.S.T.

Winston G. Lawson
Winston G. Lawson
Special Agent, U. S. Secret Service

December 1, 1963

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